

Maheu Says He Recruited Man For C.I.A. in Castro Poison Plot

By NICHOLAS M. HORROCKS
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WASHINGTON, July 30 — Robert A. Maheu, a former agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and former aide to Howard R. Hughes, said today that he had recruited a Mafia figure for the Central Intelligence Agency in a plot to poison Fidel Castro, Premier of Cuba.

Mr. Maheu told reporters of his role in the C.I.A. plot to kill Mr. Castro after completing more than four hours of testimony in closed session before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. A committee source said privately that Mr. Maheu's public statements were almost identical with his testimony. Mr. Maheu was granted immunity from prosecution on matters covered in his testimony.

Mr. Maheu said that to his knowledge the C.I.A. plot against Mr. Castro that he was involved in was never put into action.

Earlier, Senator George McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, released a report on 24 alleged C.I.A. assassination attempts against Mr. Castro, said to have been investigated and documented by the Cuban police. The report was turned over to Mr. McGovern by the Cuban Government.

Mr. McGovern, who visited Cuba recently, said that he planned to give the report to the intelligence committee for investigation. He said that he and his staff had made no independent investigation of any of the allegations in the report and could not vouch for its truthfulness.

Mr. Maheu's news conference today represented the first public statement by a participant detailing the C.I.A. plotting against Mr. Castro, which had been reported a month ago by sources close to the case. The committee has heard testimony from several other Government officials named in the plot and from a Mafia figure, John Ro-

This was the sketch of the plot given by Mr. Maheu:

He became a paid C.I.A. operative in 1954, seven years after he resigned from the F.B.I., and accepted several while heading a firm called Robert Maheu & Associates in Washington.

He said that he was paid \$500 a month by the C.I.A. for much of the period from 1954 to 1960, but that he was not paid for his role in the Castro assassination plot. "I didn't want to be paid," he said. "I didn't particularly enjoy this assignment."

He said that one of his assignments was an investigation, within the United States, of a foreign student the C.I.A. suspected of being a spy. He said that he had also allowed his company to be a "cover" for agency operations abroad.

In 1960, he said, he was approached by James O'Connell, who he said was an official of the C.I.A. and his "project" officer, who "asked me if in connection with a planned invasion in Cuba I would contact a Mr. John Roselli in Los Angeles, asking if Mr. Roselli would be inclined to help in a program for removing Mr. Castro from the scene or eliminating him in connection with this invasion of Cuba."

Mr. Maheu said that at "that time, and nothing has happened to change my mind in the last 15 years, I felt we were involved in a just war."

"And I agreed to make the contact," he added.

Reluctant at First

Mr. Maheu said that the C.I.A. had told him that "eliminating" Mr. Castro meant killing the Cuban leader.

He said that Mr. Roselli at first had been "very reluctant to participate," but agreed "finally, when it was explained to him that this was on behalf of this Government, and that as unpleasant as it may have sounded . . . this was a necessary ingredient so as to effectuate a successful invasion in a country which was . . . located less than 100 miles [from the United States]."

He said that he went to Miami, where he met with a man who was introduced as

"Sam Gold," but who he later learned was Sam Giancana, a Chicago racketeer figure.

He said that Mr. Roselli and Mr. Giancana had been sought out because they had gambling interests in Cuba before the revolution and still had contacts there who might be able to slip poison into the Cuban leader's food.

Mr. Maheu said that in early 1961—he could not remember the date—he was shown the poison capsules in a white envelope by Mr. O'Connell at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach, where the operation made its headquarters.

Contribution to Security

He said that he believed that Mr. Giancana and Mr. Roselli received no money from the C.I.A., either from the C.I.A. either for expenses or salary. "I personally am convinced that they agreed to join the assignment through me because they thought they were making a contribution to the national security of our country," he said.

He said that he knew of no agreement to protect the two men from any Federal criminal prosecution they might subsequently face.

Mr. Maheu said that he had dealt with only two superiors in the C.I.A., Mr. O'Connell and Sheffield Edwards, who, subsequent published reports have indicated, was in charge of the operation. Mr. Edwards died recently.

Mr. Maheu said that he had been told the operation could not go forward without a "go signal," and to his knowledge none had ever been issued.

He said that Mr. Edwards told him sometime after the Bay of Pigs invasion in April, 1961, that "there came a time prior to the invasion—the attempted invasion—that Mr. Castro, either his brother Raúl or Mr. Che [Che Guevara], and I can't remember which of the two, could have been administered the poison, but that the go signal had not been given."

Mr. Maheu said that he stayed in Miami several months between the fall of 1960 and the spring of 1961, because "someone had to be there to hold their [Mr. Roselli's and Mr. Giancana's] hands."

In the interest of keeping Mr. Giancana involved in the project, he said, he engaged a private detective agency in Miami to investigate the comedian Dan Rowan. According to several published reports, Mr.

Rowan feared that Mr. Rowan was distracting the attentions of the singer Phyllis McGuire, who was a friend of Mr. Giancana's.

Mr. Maheu said that in early 1961, the biggest client of his public relations firm, Howard R. Hughes, urged him to come to Los Angeles, and that he finally told Mr. Hughes the secret project he was working on.

He said that in the fall of 1966, Mr. Hughes asked him to help the Hughes organization to become part of a C.I.A. covert operation to give the billionaire's empire protection from investigation by other Government agencies. He said that he "categorically" refused. He said that in 1970 and 1971 he learned that the C.I.A. and Mr. Hughes were conspiring against him.

Mr. Hughes later, without Mr. Maheu's knowledge, became involved in a secret project by the C.I.A. to raise a sunken Soviet submarine from the floor of the Pacific Ocean, according to authoritative intelligence sources.

Mr. Maheu said that he "phased out" of the plot against Mr. Castro in early 1961. According to authoritative sources, the same combination of men, without Mr. Maheu, planned several subsequent plots against the Cuban leader.

Some of these others may have been included in the 24 plots alleged in the Cuban report given to Senator McGovern. Though many of the plots the report said were C.I.A.-instigated involved Cubans not known in this country, it names several prominent members of Cuban freedom organizations here.

It mentions one plot, for instance, in which Manuel Artime, a Cuban-American leader at the Bay of Pigs, was said to have tried in 1965 to recruit an assassin from among Cuban officials stationed in Madrid. Mr. Artime is in Nicaragua on business and was not available for comment.

CIA 1.04 MAHEU
Robert

ORG 1 MAFIA

CIA 4.01 ASSASSINATION

CASTRO, Fidel

CIA 8 Senate Select

Committee

McGovern, George

CIA 1.04 O'Connell

Edwards

Shofsky